DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 354 046 JC 930 086

AUTHOR Watts, Gordon E.
TITLE Effective Strategies in Selecting Quality Faculty.
PUB DATE Feb 93
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the International Conference for Community College Chairs, Deans, and Other Instructional Leaders (2nd, Phoenix, AZ, February 17-20, 1993).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Faculty; Community Colleges; Competitive Selection; *Employment Interviews; Faculty College Relationship; Faculty Recruitment; Personnel Policy; *Search Committees (Personnel); *Teacher Background; Teacher Behavior; *Teacher Qualifications; *Teacher Selection; Two Year Colleges

ABSTRACT

While the prospect of hiring new faculty members can cause significant apprehension for department chairpersons, a number of procedures can be employed to dramatically increase the chances of hiring a truly outstanding faculty member. The most successful searches include a series of well-defined steps moving through pre-search, search, and post-search activities. Pre-search activities include appointing a search committee and preparing the advertisement for the position. The search phase includes screening the applicants on paper; conducting reference checks, a screening interview, and the selection interview; and making the selection decision. The post-search activities include making the offer to the selected individual, and helping to make their transition to the institution as smooth as possible. While the entire process is important, the selection interview itself provides the best opportunity for assessing the potential match between the individual and the needs of the institution. The selection interview should be a structured interview based on "description behavior interviewing" and should utilize the same base questions with each candidate. Behavior description interviewing involves asking candidates to describe their behaviors in past situations related to the job expectations of the current position. Currency and longevity of the desired behaviors serve can serve as predictors of future behavior. The selection interview should also include a 20 to 30 minute teaching simulation. The candidates should teach on the same topic, and should have at least a week to prepare the simulation. Finally, the selection interviewers should ask candidates to assess an example of student performance to ensure that candidate methods and standards are consistent with those of the institution. (PAA)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED354046

EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES IN SELECTING QUALITY FACULTY

by
Gordon E. Watts
North Arkansas Community College
Harrison, Arkansas

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
G. Watts

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☒ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

prepared for the
Second International Conference of Community College Chairs and Deans
Phoenix, Arizona
February 17-20, 1993

JC930086

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES IN SELECTING QUALITY FACULTY

Most division/department chairpersons, when faced with the task of hiring a new faculty member, feel uneasy, anxious, and often overwhelmed. Too quickly is the chair reminded of the candidate who looked outstanding on paper, but was obviously unsuitable after only 5 minutes of interviewing. Or perhaps the newly hired faculty member whose interview promised excellence but whose performance is "anything but" comes to mind. These and other "horror stories" often make the selection process appear to be a shot in the dark, a process fraught with doubt, uncertainty, and guesswork.

Despite the apprehension and difficulties, the division/ department chair has to select that one applicant who is judged to be the best possible match for the needs and desires of the department, division, and/ or institution. Furthermore, the chair must accomplish this task with a minimum of guesswork and uncertainty. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to provide the division/department chair with procedures and techniques that will remove much of the guesswork and uncertainty from the process and dramatically increase the chances of selecting a truly outstanding faculty member. Specifically, this paper will provide a brief overview of the entire selection process, and then discuss in detail the use of search committees and nontraditional techniques such as behavior description interviewing, teaching simulations, and assessments of student performance.

THE SELECTION PROCESS

The most successful searches are those that consider the selection as a process and proceed through a well defined set of steps. Hammons (1992a) suggests looking at the process in a series of steps that proceed from pre-search to search to post-search activities. Pre-search activities in Hammons' scheme include selecting or appointing a search committee and preparing the advertisement for the position. The search phase includes screening the applicants on paper, conducting reference checks, conducting a screening interview, conducting the selection interview, and making the selection decision. The post-search

activities, then, include making the offer to the selected applicant and follow-up with that individual to make his or her transition to the institution as smooth as possible.

Terrill (1992) in describing a search process for administrators, conceptualizes the process as a set of building blocks as illustrated in figure one on page 3. Although Terrill's process focuses on the selection of administrators, the similarities between her process and Hammon's should be apparent. Similar steps or elements in the process also appear in other publications on selecting college personnel (Higgins and Hollander, 1987 and Marchese, 1987).

The remainder of this paper, while acknowledging the importance of the entire selection process, will address primarily the selection interview itself, which for the division/department chair is the heart of the selection process. For it is in the selection interview that the division/department chair has the best and potentially the most fruitful opportunity to ascertain the extent of the match not only between the applicant who appears on paper and the one who appears in the interview, but also, and of more importance, between the applicant's skills, abilities, traits, and experiences and those desired by the institution. The division/ department chair who follows the principles and steps outlined below should be able to hire an exceptional faculty member with a minimum of uncertainty and anxiety.

THE SEARCH COMMITTEE

It is the view of this author that the division/department chair should always utilize a search committee in the selection process. Perhaps the most obvious reason for doing so is to share the enormous burden of the paperwork involved. However, the search committee also satisfies a need for participatory decision making within the division or department and if selected with care, can head off any allegations of bias or unfair treatment of women or minorities.

Size and Composition

According to Higgins and Hollander (1987), "Ideally, a search committee should be as small as possible, yet large enough to include

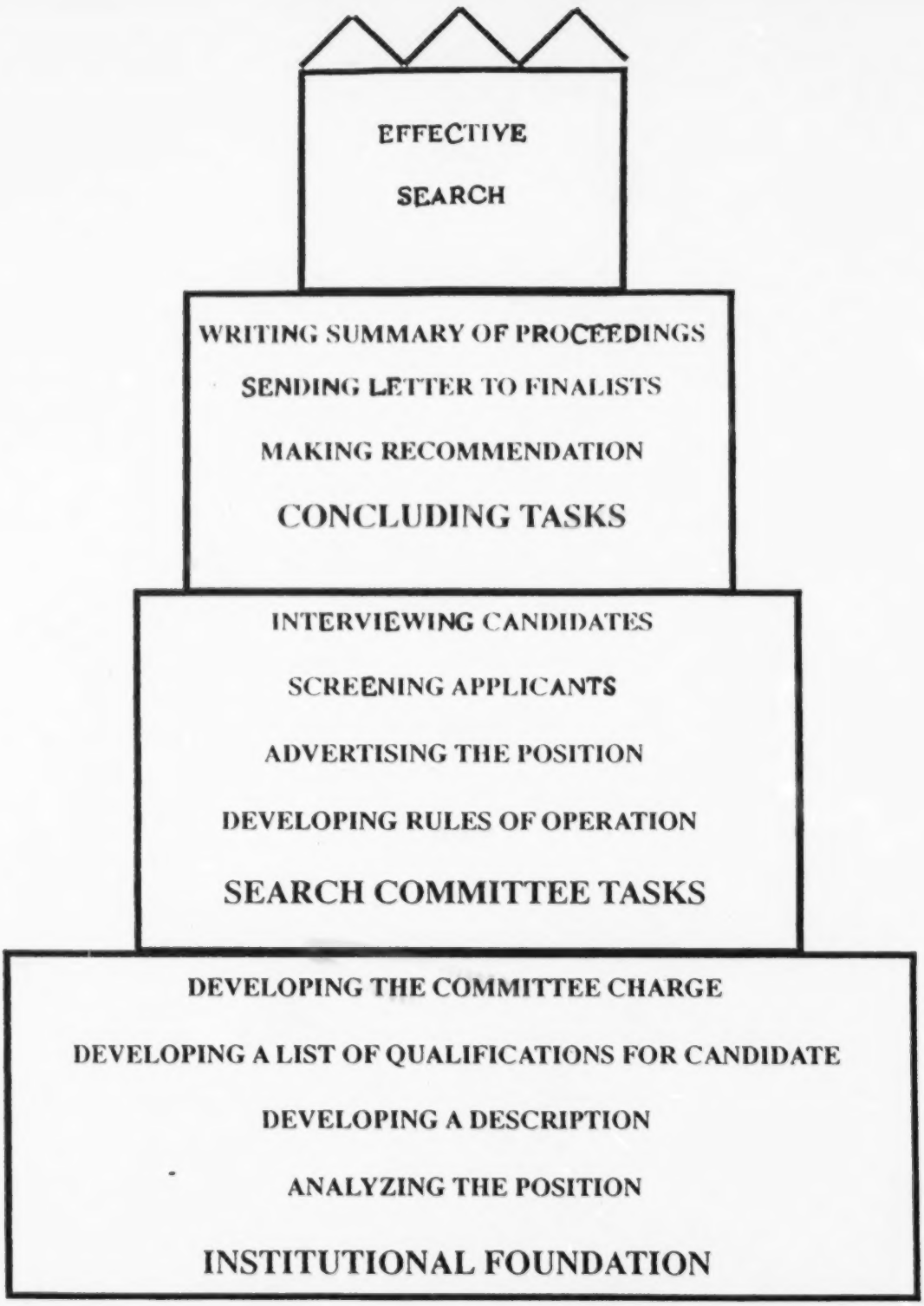
EFFECTIVE
SEARCH
WRITING SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS
SENDING LETTER TO FINALISTS
MAKING RECOMMENDATION
CONCLUDING TASKS
INTERVIEWING CANDIDATES
SCREENING APPLICANTS
ADVERTISING THE POSITION
DEVELOPING RULES OF OPERATION
SEARCH COMMITTEE TASKS
DEVELOPING THE COMMITTEE CHARGE
DEVELOPING A LIST OF QUALIFICATIONS FOR CANDIDATE
DEVELOPING A DESCRIPTION
ANALYZING THE POSITION
INSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATION

Figure 1

as many legitimate interests as possible." A search committee of from 5 to 9 individuals should suffice and should avoid too many difficulties in scheduling meetings.

The search committee should naturally have representatives from the discipline area in which the newly selected faculty member will teach. The committee should also include at least one representative from within the division/department, but not in the same discipline; one faculty representative from outside of the division to provide a different or perhaps more objective viewpoint; and any non-faculty staff member who might come into frequent contact with the newly hired faculty member. For example, a biology laboratory assistant should serve on a search committee for a biology or other life science instructor. A case might even be made for having a member of the student services staff serve on the search committee in order to provide another viewpoint on how student oriented the applicant appears.

Role of the Search Committee

The role and function of the search committee is multifaceted, as can be seen in this list from Higgins and Hollander (1987).

Search committee members:

1. set a timetable for each search procedure;
2. formulate the position description;
3. determine criteria for the position;
4. select newspapers and journals in which advertisements appear;
5. write advertisements for newspapers and journals, and the Notice of Vacancy;
6. review applications to determine if the applicants meet the advertised qualifications;
7. develop lists of questions to ask referees by telephone;
8. make telephone calls to referees as assigned by chair and make reports to the entire committee;
9. participate in initial and second screening of candidates;

10. assist chair with travel accommodations and interviewing schedules;

12. participate in observing demonstration class or seminar and formal interview;

13. complete evaluation forms for candidates' demonstration classes or seminars and for the formal interview;

14. participate in final evaluation and formulation of recommendation to supervisor;

15. attend all meetings and maintain appropriate confidentiality about search committee proceedings.

The most important of these functions for the present discussion is formulating the position description and developing the set of qualifications for the position. One other function alluded to in Higgins and Hollander's list that is crucial to the success of the selection interview is developing a set of interview questions. That function will be described in more detail in the section on Behavior Description Interviewing.

Developing the Job Description/Requirements. The search committee that doesn't take the time to carefully define precisely the kind of faculty member that is being sought will probably not have a successful search. Not only does the description lead to the development of the qualifications that will go into the advertisement, but it will also be used extensively to develop the questions asked during the interview.

The most likely source for the description is the official institutional faculty job description. If that proves insufficient or is totally absent, consider using a description of the role of the faculty member if one is available, a published list of characteristics of effective instruction or effective instructors, or even those characteristics or job functions that are addressed in the instrument used in faculty evaluation. In addition, the search committee might also be guided by answering these questions raised by Terrill (1992): What task does this position require now? What might it require in the future? What knowledge, experience, abilities, and traits are necessary? In any case, the result of this process should be a rather clearly delineated set of duties, requirements, responsibilities, and expectations for the faculty position.

Identifying Qualifications. Closely associated with the duties and expectations for the position are the qualifications. Higgins and Hollander (1987) suggest that the qualifications center around degree or licensure requirements, experience, and personal qualifications. Terrill (1992) suggests that the committee be further guided by determining which qualifications are essential, which are preferred, and what calibre of candidate can be attracted.

Once the above tasks are completed, advertisements written and posted, and applications received, the initial screening can begin. Aided by the lists of job duties, responsibilities, expectations, and qualifications previously articulated, the search committee should be able to narrow the candidates down to those who will be invited for a selection interview.

THE SELECTION INTERVIEW

The selection interview should be a structured interview based on behavior description interviewing and should include a teaching simulation and, whenever possible, an assessment of student performance.

Structured Interview

Conducting a structured interview means simply that the division/department chair with the assistance of the search committee develops a plan for the interview and follows that plan in the same way for each candidate interviewed. Further, it means that each candidate is asked the same basic set of questions during the interview with the search committee, although follow-up questions may differ. Hammons (1992b) points out that the advantages of a structured interview include the assurance to a candidate of a fair and impartial interview, assistance in keeping the search committee on target and away from tangents, assistance in monitoring and controling the amount of time devoted to each topic, and the avoidance of legal issues.

Behavior Description Interviewing

Although search committees do frequently have an adequate description of the person that they are looking for, all too frequently

there is little congruence between those descriptions and the questions asked in an interview to probe the behavior associated with the descriptors. That incongruence is probably the principAL handicap in search committees' ability to be consistent in hiring the highest quality faculty member possible. That incongruence, however, can be overcome with the use of behavior description interviewing.

Behavior description interviewing is a term coined by Tom Janz and described fully in a book with the same title. In essence, behavior description interviewing involves asking candidates questions that probe their past behaviors in relation to the job duties, responsibilities, requirements, and/or expectations that a search committee has previously defined. This technique, according to the authors, is based on the premise that "The best predictor of future behavior/performance is past behavior/performance in similar circumstances." (Janz, Hellervik, and Gilmore, 1986) The authors also suggest two corollaries to this simple principle: first, that the more recent the previous behavior, the greater its ability to predict future behavior and second, that the longer the individual practiced the behavior, the greater its ability to predict future behavior.

Clearly, if a search committee has not carefully defined the job requirements and expectations, behavior decription interviewing becomes quite difficult, perhaps impossible. Although, even if the job requirements are carefully spelled out, developing appropriate behavior description questions is a challenge.

To clarify the difference between the more traditional questions and behavior description questions, consider these two questions: "What is your philosophy of evaluation?" and "Please describe the evaluation system you used in the most recent course you taught?" (Coady, 1990). The response to the first question is likely to be an intellectual response based on what the applicant may have learned in a graduate course or what the applicant thinks the committee is looking for. The response is not likely to yield any information about previous behavior or experience with evaluation. The second question, on the other hand, will yield information about previous behavior because it forces the applicant to address those previous behaviors and experiences directly.

One of the characteristics of a behavior description question is that it leads almost effortlessly to follow-up questions that elicit even more specific behavioral information. For the second question above, Coady (1990) suggests these follow-up questions: "Was the system normative or criterion referenced?" "What kind of tests and exercises did you assign?" "How much weight did each carry?" and "How did the tests and exercises reinforce each other?"

If the search committee feels that the conditions surrounding testing and evaluating students are important to the position, then the responses to the above questions will be indicative of how the candidate will test and evaluate students once on the job. The committee then knows how compatible the candidate's methods and procedures are with theirs and also whether or not those methods are of the calibre desired.

To illustrate behavior description interviewing further, suppose that among a search committee's list of requirements for a new faculty position was "a commitment to professional development." That requirement would be highly likely for a community college faculty position, but it could be stated a little more specifically to aid question development as follows: to actively engage in his or her professional development. Possible questions, then, could be: How do you feel about faculty development? or What is your commitment to your professional development? However, neither of these questions would yield much information that would be indicative of how the prospective faculty member would "actively engage in" his or her professional development.

A better question might be, How do you keep yourself current as a faculty member? Responses to this one would probably include references to books or articles read, conferences or workshops attended, or membership in professional organizations. Certainly, there is more information predictive of future behavior in those responses. However, an even more revealing question might be, During the past year, what professional development activity in which you participated has had the greatest impact on your classroom instruction? The most revealing responses to this or any follow-up questions should indicate that the candidate learned something of value from a

professional development activity, implemented or in some way utilized the information, and could ascertain its impact on his or her classroom. Responses that did not refer in some way to those considerations might well indicate that the candidate was not too serious about engaging in his or her professional growth.

The challenge, then, in developing questions for behavior description interviewing is to construct ones that will yield a wealth of information about past behavior. It will take some thought to develop good questions, but with practice and a well thought out and articulated job description, the search committee will be able to make a significant improvement in the predictive ability of the selection interview.

The Teaching Simulation

Following the reasoning that past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior, the search committee should require each candidate to conduct a 20 to 30 minute class session. Since teaching is the central activity of a community college faculty member, it makes good sense to see first hand how that prospective faculty member performs. Having the candidate conduct a teaching simulation, demonstration, or audition also reinforces for them (and perhaps the search committee) the importance the institution is placing on classroom performance.

In setting up the teaching simulation, the search committee should follow the guidelines outlined below.

- Tell each candidate when inviting them for and scheduling an interview that the teaching simulation is required.
- Provide at least a week between the invitation and the interview.
- Suggest a 20 to 30 minute time line.
- Provide each candidate with the same topic so that comparisons can be made.
- Select a topic that is possible and reasonable to do in 20 to 30 minutes.

- Select a topic that current faculty members in that discipline find troublesome for either themselves or their students. Thus, the faculty members on the search committee will be more likely to identify the high quality presentation.

- Be sure that the candidate has all the audio/visual equipment or other teaching aids that he or she requests or may need to use.

- Invite staff members other than those on the search committee to attend the simulation. Afterwards, seek their impressions of the candidates. They will often provide valuable information.

- Develop a rating scale or checklist of those skills or abilities that you would hope to see demonstrated during the lesson.

- Schedule the teaching simulation at a time that follows the formal interview with the search committee.

Those division/department chairs who have never used the teaching simulation in an interview may initially balk at what may seem to be an artificial situation. However, in this author's experience, however artificial it may appear to be, the teaching simulation has been an invaluable addition to the selection process. Candidates have repeatedly expressed appreciation for having been given the opportunity to "show their stuff." Moreover, they are highly likely to have performed in the simulation as they have in the past and as they will continue to do in the future.

Assessment of Student Performance

Another strategy for gathering predictive information about a candidate that can prove helpful is to ask the candidate to assess an example of student performance. The relevance or utility of this approach stems from the feeling among faculty that certain of their students' tasks, products, performances, or outcomes should be assessed in certain ways. Faculty would like the assurance that any new colleague approaches that assessment with methods, standards, attention to detail, or rigor that are consistent or compatible with their own.

This strategy has been especially helpful in selecting English

composition or developmental writing instructors. The candidate is given two examples of student papers and asked to assess them. The candidate is given ample time and a quiet space to do the assessment. When finished, the candidate is asked to share his or her assessment with the search committee. The search committee can then ask further questions about the candidate's assessment and even ask him or her to assign a grade to the papers. As a result of this process, the writing instructors on the search committee should have an excellent idea of exactly how compatible the candidates standards are with their own.

The following are some guidelines for utilizing the assessment of student performances.

- Tell each candidate when inviting them for and scheduling an interview that assessing a particular example of student performance will be part of the interview.
- Select a student performance for which divisional/ departmental consistency in assessment is important.
- Select an example of the student performance that is of average quality to give the candidate ample grist to work with.
- In the absence of a good example from a real student, develope one.
- Provide ample time and a quiet location for the candidate to complete the assessment.
- Have the candidate share his or her assessment with the search committee. If the methods or standards that the candidate uses would be obvious to the search committee, this step could be eliminated.

CONCLUSION

It may seem that there is a substantial amount of work involved for the division/department chair who chooses to utilize the strategies described in this paper - a search committee, behavior description interviewing, teaching simulations, and assessments of student performance. Yes, it is true that the process and strategies require considerable time and effort, but the benefits that derive from planning, preparing, and conducting a thorough selection far outweigh any disadvantages.

The division/department chair who uses these strategies will experience a dramatic decrease in his or her anxiety, doubt, and uncertainty about hiring new faculty members. The division/ department chair and faculty will also experience the increased feelings of confidence that come from knowing that the newly hired faculty member has clearly demonstrated in the past and/or in the interview that he or she meets or exceeds all the requirements of the position. In the long term, the division/department chair can feel fairly certain that he or she will not experience the headaches, tensions, and problems that surround a mis-hire. If a division/department chair wants to hire the best faculty member possible the first time, can he or she afford not to use these strategies?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Coady, Sharon (1990) "How to Hire Good Faculty". Unpublished Conference Handout, Pique, Ohio: Edison State Community College

Hammons, James O. (1992a) "Steps to Better Selection" Unpublished Workshop Transparency, Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas

Hammons, James O. (1992b) "Advantages of a Structured Interview" Unpublished Workshop Transparency, Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas

Higgins, John M. and Hollander, Patricia A. (1987) **A Guide to Successful Searches for College Personnel: Policies, Procedures, and Legal Issues.** Asheville, North Carolina: College Administration Publications, Inc.

Janz, Tom, Hellervik, Lowell, and Gilmore, David C. (1986) **Behavior Description Interviewing.** Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Marchese, Theodore J. (1987). **The Search Committee Handbook: A Guide to Recruiting Administrators.** Washington D.C.: American Association for Higher Education

Terrill, Marty, (1992) "The Role of the Search Committee in the Search Process" Unpublished Paper, Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Gordon E. Watts

Gordon E. Watts is currently the Vice President of Instruction at North Arkansas Community College, Harrison, Arkansas, a position he has held since 1987. Prior to Gordon's current position, he held positions in Minnesota, Arkansas, and North Carolina as associate dean of instruction, division chair for developmental education, staff development director, instructor, and counselor.

Gordon earned his bachelor's degree in psychology and master's degree in counseling from the University of Florida. He earned his Ph.D. in Educational Administration from the Community College Leadership Program at the University of Texas at Austin.

A charter member of the National Council for Staff, Program, and Organizational Development (NCSPOD), Gordon has twice served as president of that organization. In 1985, Gordon was the recipient of NCSPOD's award for Outstanding Contributions to the Literature/Research on Staff Development, and in 1991, received the Glenn A. Schmitz award for Outstanding Contributions to the NCSPOD Executive Board.

In addition, Gordon was the founding editor of the **Journal of Staff, Program, and Organization Development**, serves as a North Central Association consultant/evaluator, and has a number of publications and presentations to his credit.